

## **Shigellosis**

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# **Shigellosis**

Shigellosis is an intestinal illness caused by *Shigella*, which is a family of bacteria that is comprised of 40 different types.

### **Who gets this disease?**

Anyone can, but shigellosis is recognized more often in young children.

### **How is it spread?**

Among small children in a child care facility, *the fecal-oral route usually spreads Shigella*. It takes very few swallowed *Shigella* bacteria to cause infection (as opposed to Salmonella, which takes many bacteria to cause infection); so it can easily become a problem in a child care setting. *Shigella* can also be spread through stool-contaminated food, drink or water.

### **What are the symptoms?**

*Shigella* can cause mild or severe diarrhea. In mild cases, a person may have only watery loose stools for several days. In severe cases, the diarrhea may have traces of blood or mucous and may lead to dehydration. Fever, severe cramps, vomiting, headache and even convulsions (in young children) can occur.

### **How soon do symptoms appear?**

The symptoms usually occur one to three days after exposure, but it can be as long as seven-days.

### **Can a person have this disease without knowing it?**

Yes, *Shigella* can be in the stool of children or adults who are not sick and do not have diarrhea. These asymptomatic carriers may transmit infection; rarely the carrier state persists for months or longer.

### **What is the treatment?**

Although most people with shigellosis will recover on their own, antibiotics shorten both the length of the illness and the amount of time bacteria is passed in the stool, which is particularly important in the day care setting.

### **How can the spread of this disease be prevented?**

1. Wash hands thoroughly after using the toilet.
2. Wash hands thoroughly before preparing food.
3. Keep children who have diarrhea at home.
4. Staff with positive stool cultures for *Shigella* should not prepare food or feed

children.

**Who should be excluded?**

Infected persons shall be excluded from food handling, from child care facilities and from direct care of hospitalized and institutionalized patients until stool cultures are free of *Shigella* on two consecutive specimens collected not less than 24-hours apart. If antibiotics have been taken, the initial cultures shall be obtained at least 48-hours after the last dose.

**Reportable?**

Yes, Shigellosis is reportable by New Hampshire law.